HUMOUR AND FAITH

AS

FUNCTIONAL ALTERNATIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper makes the claim that humour and faith are functional alternatives. Articles written by Reinhold Neibuhr and Peter Berger were used as a starting point for this argument. Their claims are placed into the context of a functional alternative claim in order to make them more sociologically relevant. From an analysis of the issue at the social, social psychological and physiological perspectives, insight was gained into such diverse topics as discrimination, secularization and ritual. This wide array of insight supports the idea that this functional alternative claim can be used to further the discipline of Sociology of Religion as a whole.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION p. 1

THE SOCIAL ELEMENT p. 14

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENT p. 25

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL ELEMENT p. 36

CONCLUSIONS p. 47

REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

The basic premise of this paper is that the social institution of religion is influenced by the perspective of faith in a similar way to that in which the social practise of humour and joking is influenced by the comic perspective. The central claim, based upon this premise, is that humour and faith can be understood as functional alternatives(Merton 1957:33-36), ie. Certain functions that have been agreed upon to be provided by religion will be shown to be provided by humour as well. This claim is of significance because it leads to a greater understanding of religious practise and the influence of faith upon it.

Functionalist theory has been used extensively in describing religious behavior. Even some psychological theories, such as Freud's, can be interpreted as permutations of functionalism(Yinger 1957:ch.4). In response to the extensive use of functional theory, Yinger has identified several problems with functional definitions of religion(1957:7-13). The key one, for the purposes of this study, is that functional definitions tend to define functional alternatives to religion as being forms of religion.

In lieu of continuing on this discourse, this paper will illustrate that traditional functional definitions of religion can be applied to humour. This will not serve to redefine humour as a religious form but rather it will support the argument that humour can be understood as a functional alternative to religion. Based upon a rich tradition of

functionalist thought, modern functionalist theories and definitions of religion focus upon the functions of reinforcement of the social structure(Scharf 1970:74), maintenance of pattern and tradition(Parsons 1951:38-41), integration of values(Parsons 1951:163-167)(Scharf 1970:74) and most importantly, a means to struggle with the ultimate problems of life such as uncertainty, meaning and human finitude(Yinger 1957:32),(Davis 1949:532),(Parsons 1952:293-299). This paper will concentrate on the last of these functions as this function is central in most studies and, as will be developed later in this paper, actually contains within its scope many other functions including some of those mentioned above. This issue will be treated in the context of some of the basic existential paradoxes of life which will be introduced later. Although they do not make explicit functional alternative claims, Reinhold Niebuhr(1969) and Peter Berger(1961) have explored the faith/humour link. The assertions that they make will be used as a starting point for the functionalist analysis presented in this paper. Niebuhr, working from the theological perspective, expresses the essence of his assertion when he writes that:

> The intimate relation between humour and faith is derived from the fact that both deal with the incongruities of our existence. Humour is concerned with our immediate incongruities of life, and faith with the ultimate ones (1969:132).

He argues that, whereas humour resolves the incongruities by discovering a common level of incongruity within the

incongruities, faith deals with these matters in a different manner. Niebuhr argues that faith, by placing these issues in a more universal context, gives new meaning to the incongruities such as the "profound incongruity between the inner and the outer world, or between the world viewed from man's perspective, and the man in the world viewed from the more ultimate perspective(1969:136)." Niebuhr emphasizes laughter's inability to change social situations, arguing that humour only provides relief and that "bitter humour" is what results when humour is used to attempt to resolve life's greater problems and incongruities. In this sense, he has defined "immediate" as trivial and day to day, and "ultimate" as being concerned with the more important incongruities arising from extremely important issues such as death. He, therefore, does not make the claim that the present paper does that humour and faith deal with the same incongruities.

Niebuhr describes humour as being the "vestibule to the temple of confession(1969:140)." He associates humour with "proof of the capacity of the self to gain a vantage point from which it is able to look at itself(1969:140)." When the Christian confesses sin, the confession usually comes after some form of self examination. Correspondingly, humour provides a perspective from which to make this self evaluation. The next step is to take the insights gained from the comic perspective into religious confession. "If we continue to laugh after having recognized the depth of our evil, our laughter becomes the

instrument of irresponsibility(1969:141)." He is suggesting that humour only avoids the problems that faith can reconcile. This is consistent with the prescriptive and evangelical tone of the article which often takes a rhetorical form. He suggests that the joy of reconciliation with God is "a joy which stands beyond laughter" because it lasts to infinity(1969:142). This hierarchial ordering is emphasized even more by his statement that, "it [humour] must move toward faith or sink into despair when the ultimate issues are raised(1969:149)." Essentially, he states that "man can not live on humour alone" and that eventually a position of faith becomes necessary in order to answer the greater questions of life.

To summarize Niebuhr's position: laughter provides a perspective which is of great utility in reconciling man to the incongruities of life, but this reconciliation, however, will reach fruition only if it is directed towards faith and religious confession through Jesus Christ. His major claim is that humour and faith relate in a subordinate:superordinate fashion. They are similar in that they both serve as reactions to man's existential dilemnas but faith is a "superior" position that does not lead to despair and irresponsibility.

Berger's article, although not quite as sermon-like, also has a prescriptive and rhetorical nature. He begins with the assertion that "the essence of the comic is discrepancy(1961:209)," and like Niebuhr, locates this discrepancy in the chasm bewteen spirit and world. He points to death as being a frequent target of humour because it deals with

the "ultimate debunking of the spirit by the body (1961:211)." Comedy, he suggests, by providing a fleeting image of man transcending his finitude gives him a sense of wild irrational hope(1961:213). Here, Berger closes the faith/humour link: "Redemption promises us in eternity what comedy gives us in a few momments of precarious liberation--the collapse of our walls of imprisonment(1961:214)." Berger has begun with the same premise as Niebuhr: humour and faith are both reactions to the existential paradoxes of life. But, instead of suggesting that humour is an avenue to faith, he locates the comic within the Christian perspective, emphasizing that the comic provides one with "distance" and therefore a similar perspective to the Christian striving to be "in the world but not of it(1961:217)". Humour is seen to be contained within faith in that faith can do much more than to simply provide this distanced perspective. Berger identifies "hope" as being a common element of both faith and humour. In comparing tragedy and comedy, he likens the two by stating that "both tragedy and comedy proclaim to us that pride is foolish, reminding us of our humanity and hence our imprisonment(1961:212)." Comedy, with its ability to transcend this imprisonment, is similar to faith which, he argues, also has this capability. He has made a statement concerning a common essence of both faith and humour, which he identifies as hope- which can lead to emancipation. This hope, he argues, can be used to escape from such constrictions as knowledge of our imminent death, the ability to understand and love differences in

other people and to provide a perspective by which society and one's life within it can be seen more clearly.

Although both scholars begin with an incongruity-based approach to humour and faith, each fails to deal adequately with the way in which these incongruities are reconciled, going instead directly to their respective conclusions of how humour can be seen as being similar to faith. Their work is little more than assertion of the similarity between the perspectives of faith and humour. By examining in greater detail how these incongruities are reconciled and with physical examples displaying the differences and similarities of the comic and religious realms, the sociological potential of this comparison will be realized. This does not disturb the basic premise that humour and Christian faith deal with the basic issues of life such as the subjective/objective or symbolic/organic dualities. It should also be noted that plausible arguments for phenomena as diverse as sex, philosophy and Kung Fu as being alternative methods of dealing with these parodoxes of existence can also be made. Therefore, to reiterate, it is the comparison of the processes by which Christianity and humour each deal with these incongruities that is noteworthy, not just a recognition of the mere fact that they are similar in terms of the subjects they deal with. It should be noted here that although the term humour is used in these articles, it refers to the perspective of humour and not to any wider context that the term can be used in. This problem will be avoided in the present essay by explicitly refering to the perspective of humour or the comic perspective

and alternatively to humour in general when a wider context is implied.

This paper will differ from the two articles discussed above in that it will be explicitly sociological. The Niebuhr piece is clearly, as one would expect, Christian Theology. The Berger work, however, is presented as sociology. As mentioned earlier, the Berger article amounts to little more than an assertion of a relationship. Berger is advocating the use of the comic perspective to better attain the Christian perspective. It is implied by this that they are similar. Noting that "hope" exists in both faith and humour does not neccessarily allow for broader generalizations about the concept of hope. It only points to its existence in these two cases. His central argument must be understood as stating that it is the hope inherent within both faith and humour that provides transcendence, not the social practise of humour and religion. His argument does not include a range of possibilities. Most importantly, cases where humour and faith do not free and emancipate are not included. Because of this, his claims are not sociological; they cannot be empirically tested. His claim can be restated: forms of humour and faith that emancipate contain the quality of hope. He is comparing two distinct forms of a phenomenon and not the phenomenon in general. His claim, therefore, is not of any great significance. It is akin to saying that malt and grape beverages which contain alcohol may produce drunkeness. This would not tell us anything about beverages in general and would also not lead to any

understanding of alcohol outside of the context of the beverages studied. Similarily, from Berger's analysis, we do not gain any understanding of faith and humour other than to realize that "hope" ,as defined by Berger, can be found in some cases of each.

By applying the functional alternative approach, a greater range of activity can be explored. The similarities of the functions of faith and humour will be compared. Instead of stating that faith and humour are both similar because they share a common quality (hope), faith and humour will be seen to be similar because they both provide common functions (w,x.y) in a common social system (z). These functions are observable and various forms of humour and faith will be shown to produce common results and provide common functions. While it must not be forgotten that claims such as those made by Berger are still of value, in the form that he has presented them, they are not testable scientific propositions.

In addition to putting this said relationship of faith and humour into a testable form, and locating this present study within an established body of sociological research and theory, the functional alternative approach has other benefits. Firstly, it will help refute the idea, still held by some, that religion is a functional requisite of our society. This being because humour will be shown to be able to replace religion in its provision of several of its functions. Secondly, the difficult topic of faith will be illuminated. The characteristics of faith are very elusive. The conservative Protestant theology that has pervaded much of our society holds that faith is a very private

entity that is unique to each person. Faith, for many, is a topic that simply cannot be discussed. Hence, its study becomes difficult. The sense of humour too, although not so severely, also has this individualistic image that makes it a difficult topic to study. People often feel "slighted" when the self perceived uniqueness of their personal orientations such as faith and the sense of humour are treated in general terms. This type of study, by employing insights into both topics should help offset some of these difficulties. Thirdly, and most importantly, this understanding of faith will be used in order to obtain a better understanding of the process by which the orientation of faith is translated into religious practise.

This paper will study the claim of faith and humour as functional alternatives on the social, social psychological and physiological levels. Firstly, at the social level, the basic existential paradox of the self and other will be analyzed. This will be dealt with at the macro level and will therefore concentrate upon how members of one group relate to members of other groups. It will be argued that religion provides the function of supplying a forum for social criticism in which the function of provision of values and what is "right" and "wrong" is addressed. It will then be shown that humour can serve as functional alternative regarding these issues. The argument will be put forth that the comic perspective relates to humour in general in a similar way as the perspective of faith relates to religion. The concept of "doubt" will then be

introduced. It will then be claimed that since humour and religion provide the same function with a similar process that humour that does not recognize doubt about an issue will function in a similar manner to a religious stance that does not recognize doubt. Similarly, when the perspectives of faith and humour are based on a high degree of doubt, their consequences will also be similar. It will be noted that low doubt is associated with discrimination and high doubt with more unifying activity. This dual potential, held by both humour and faith, will support the claim that they can be recognized as functional alternatives. These propositions regarding the influence of doubt, however, are now in a testable form and various methodologies could be employed to test this relationship more rigorously with empirical study. To reiterate, the function of providing a forum for social criticism will be extended to include an explanation of how both humour and faith can come to unify groups within society or, conversely, to reinforce discrimination and foster disunity in a given society. For the purposes of this present study, the key insight is into the process by which religious practise, in answer to a basic existential paradox, can serve to fulfill both of these functions, thereby, improving the understanding of this dual potential in religious practise. We will come to the understanding which was proposed at the outset that religion and humour are alternative forums for, and not causes of, prejudice and discrimination. This is based upon the potential held by both to be used in both unifying and disunifying ways.

In the social psychological section, the distanced view

that can be provided by the perspectives of both humour and faith will be analyzed. In this section as well, religion which contains the perspective of faith, and humour which contains the comic perspective, will be displayed as functional alternatives. Their similarity in addressing the discontinuity between logical and non logical thought as well as the subjective/objective dichotomy will be analyzed. In particular, these perspectives will be viewed in respect to their common quality of being able to dislodge people into the realm of the non logical and to provide a "distanced" view that would be helpful in social psychological therapy. Again, the quality held by both faith and humour of being able to be seen in both emancipatory or repressive roles will be emphasized. An extrapolation from the functional alternative view will follow. Humour, due to its relative accessibility, will be seen as an agent of secularization as people can choose humour over faith in order to fulfill this function of "distancing" in their lives. This argument will be placed in the context of other theories of secularization which have arrived at similar conclusions.

The symbolic/organic duality will be the focus of the section written from the physiological perspective. Although the analysis of "healing" by both faith and humour lends creedence to the functional alternative claim, the general implications of this analysis do not support this claim but rather, they, point us in another direction. This direction, however, will prove quite fruitful because faith and humour

provide similar functions in quite dissimilar ways. It is through comparison of the two, that unique qualities of each become observable. It will be argued that since faith and the comic perspective have such vastly different physiological correlates, the "immediacy" of the perspective of humour discussed by both Niebuhr and Berger is an area worthy of further study. Immediacy in this sense, refers to the degree of mediation required to bring about a physical response to the orientation of humour which is quite different from the way the body responds to the orientation of faith. This idea will be used to offer an alternative explanation to the general functionalist claims of group maintenance (Scharf 1970:31-33) or interactionist interpretations (Hill 1973:216-217) that are often used to explain the existence of the wide variety of physical activities associated with various religious forms. Included in these would be the many forms of ritual.

This paper will conclude that, by understanding humour and faith as functional alternatives, sociological insight into the institution of religion can be gained. In particular, the understanding of the processes by which the orientation of faith influences religious practise will be illuminated. The chart on the following page will provide a review, at a glance, of the basic arguments to be presented in this paper.

THE SOCIAL ELEMENT

The perspective of faith has been suggested by both Niebuhr and Berger to have a distancing quality that aids one in understanding and accepting both our sins and the sins of the world. Humour too, can also provide a similar quality of providing perspective. They, therefore, can be seen as functional alternatives in that they both provide this function. The perspectives are both used in connection with and, as we shall see more clearly later, in the service of social criticism. Assuming forms such as caricature and exaggeration, humour not only often gains acceptance more readily than faith but it often "dislodges" people into seeing things in a new way. In applying Hegelian dialectic to humour, Paulucci is in direct opposition to Niebuhr's (1969:137) view that emphasizes laughter's inability to change social situations.

> Comedy is an exhaustion of an age and clears the way for what follows; it is an historically negative force, the final statement of a given equation. In its individual dramatic expression, however, it appears as a positive force, an art form in its own right... in order to expose a sham and restore through ridicule and laughter a proper balance(Paulucci 1978:93).

Very little writing on the subject of humour addresses the question of what is not funny, but anyone will attest that some people find things funny that others are either indifferent to or even offended by. This "dislodging" notion may shed some light in this area. Many people are not yet ready to have their

view challenged and in these cases when humour has this aim, successful humour is unlikely. The up-and-coming executive of the arms division of Sperry Rand is not likely to be dislodged by left-wing pacifist satire if he or she feels comfortable with the stand he or she has chosen. Nor does the radical feminist who has used anti-chauvinist humour to make her views known continue to find this humour amusing if nobody is affected by the jokes. Whether someone is prepared to hear a joke is often at question. Given the idea that humour serves the function of dislodging, one need not ask what is and is not funny but rather what effect the timing and context of the joke has on its degree of appreciation. These factors may prove to be more important than the subject matter itself. When humour is to serve the purpose of freeing or dislodging, it follows that jokes will much less likely be funny if this purpose is not served. In situations where people are not ready to have their viewpoint challenged or, conversely, have accepted the point of view that the joke professes, no humour of the dislodging sort takes place. The result is often one of offending the party for whom the joke was created or told. The joke, or anecdote, is not funny in the given context.

Humour and religion can be compared here in that they both can be interpreted as forms of rhetoric, or more exactly, they both serve the function of providing a forum for rhetoric. Religious testemonials of events such as "visions" and "answered prayer" have more effect on people in the middle ground with a predisposition towards wanting to believe. The person who is

completely cynical regarding these events and the person who accepts them as commonplace is not likely to be as motivated by these type of happenings. The person of faith with doubt is most easliy swayed by religious testimony in the same way as the person without conclusions on a specific issue is most vulnerable to the comic perspective in social criticism.

A key link between faith and humour has been identified. This being that the degree of doubt contained within each is an important variable. Faith is a way of knowing that can be seen as an alternative to logical or more scientific modes of interpreting reality. Faith can provide a way of understanding such things as the origins of the universe and the destiny of man. It can also provide a rationelle for knowing the proper stance to take regarding various social issues. In fact, when taken past the religious realm, faith becomes a way to understand or know anything. Faith can take various forms. This essay will concentrate on the variation in doubt that can occur within the stance of faith. For instance, some Christian varities, such as the fundamentalist orientation, place little doubt in the firmly held interpretations that they use to guide their lives. Conversely, existentialist theologians, and more "middle of the road" Christians would place doubt in the existence of God and God's characteristics in a central position of their overall belief structure. Humour too, is quite different dependending upon the doubt of both those creating and those reacting to the humour. One way to interpret humour, as

Harry Mindess does is to see humour as liberating one from the incongruities associated with these subjects.

> Incongruity is simply the experience of liberation from expected images or thoughts, while dispargement of others is nothing more than the liberation of aggresive desires. (Mindess 1971:242)

Conversely, this interpretation of humour can be "flipped" in order to see humour as a repressing force. Humour, comedy and laughter can also be seen as methods of harsh and unfair ridicule, a social sanctioning system and being generally oppressive in nature. Bergson (1911) supplies many of the ideas that can lead one to a negative interpretation of humour. Bergson saw laughter not as an emotion but rather the suspension of emotion (1911:5,136). In order to laugh at someone that you are attracted to, says Bergson, this attraction must be repressed. Further, he saw laughter as a social corrective, "...society holds suspended over each individual member, if not the threat of correction, at all events the prospect of snubbing, which although it is slight is none the less dreaded. Such must be the function of laughter. Always rather humiliating for the one against whom it is directed laughter is really and truly a kind of social 'ragging'(1911:176)." Bergson saw, "the business of laughter to [be to] repress any separatist tendency(1911:177)." Comedy is a special inversion of common sense and "it consists in seeking to mould things on an idea of ones own, instead of molding one's ideas on things(1911:184)."

Hobbes' theory of humour, which employs a negative

definition of man, relegates humour to the role of enforcement of superiority. Allport (1954), Gruner (1978,ch.3), and Ziv (1981) have provided a modern thrust in this train of thought. Ziv analyzes the sexual innuendo and humour in society from the perspective that the humour represents aggresive frustrations and he suggests that humour may prolong the overcoming of these repressed emotions.

Among the most notable forms of disparaging humour is the racial and ethnic joke. Several authors have given evidence suggesting the negative aspects of this type of humour. These arguments can be understood within the context of the basic implications of the comic perspective which is the focus of the present study. Accepting Freud's definition of the comical as "palpable absurdity", the disparaging joke is funny because it jointly recognizes a single item as being palpable and absurd. The disparaging joke in itself can essentially be seen as a ridiculous comment. The fact that some people appear to use jokes to reinforce stereotypes like the stingy Scotsman or the lazy Mexican is yet another matter. Certain studies in social science have lead to the conclusion that blacks have lower intelligence than whites. To accuse humour of being inherently discriminatory is to argue with the same fallacy as those who call social science a prejudiced discipline because of these studies.

By the same token, faith is not the cause of some people justifying racial prejudice with Biblical reference. In these instances, faith, humour and science are being used as

venues for prejudice; they are not inherently prejudiced. The response to ethnic humour depends on the people engaging in the humour and their attitudes at the time of the joke. Two Catholics will react differently to a Catholic joke than will the lone Catholic who overhears two Protestants enjoying a "Dogan" joke. In most cases one needs to be "included in" on a joke in order to laugh at it. The fact that the Catholic has been excluded from something is the important fact, not the fact that this something was a joke. If the content of a joke is held constant and inclusion/exclusion factor changed, the relative "funniness" can still change greatly. The great number of Jewish and Jewish mother jokes told by professional comics is acceptable only because they themselves are invariably Jewish. Eddie Murphy, in his movie "Delirious" states at the end of the film that he is very happy to be able to "wiggle his ass" on the stage of a building negroes were not even allowed to be in when he was born. He and the audience are together in this appreciation; everyone present is included in on the joke.

The most productive ethnic joke is of this kind where two people of different orientations can come to share a superior position of relativity when they share a joke. Each week I receive correspondence from my father and more often than not a "catholic" cartoon or joke is included. This is likely due to the fact that he is Protestant and I am Roman Catholic. From the perspective of "liberation" theory (Mindess 1971), this humour can allow us to liberate the tension created by our differences.

I recently received a cartoon of the Pope and the Devil meeting in hell with the Pope commenting, "There must have been some mistake." This cartoon emphasizes and provides comfort with the "palpable absurdity" that my father and I will have different afterlives. It dislodges us from a doctrinal stance that even The Church no longer wishes to maintain. We are both "ready" to be dislodged from our views, as we both recognize the tentativeness of our standpoints. Had I arrived at home and found my father and his Presbyterian cronies sitting around laughing at the cartoon, the exclusion factor would not have lead to the same result as above. It is likely that my father has shared the cartoon with me because he has doubt in the belief that we are "different". Had he no doubt in this belief, he could have reinforced his view by sharing the cartoon within his own group or not to bother with the joke at all since he does not need to have his view reinforced. If a member of one group shares a joke with a non member, it likely displays the sharing of mutual doubt and when a member of a group shares a joke with another member of his or her own group while non members are excluded, the situation can be explained with the following two solutions.

Firstly, assume that the doubt exists, but is repressed and can only be expressed with humour. The arguments for the use of humour in psychoanalytic therapy (Levine 1977),(Greenwald 1977)(Grossman 1977) offer support for this thesis. Secondly, no doubt may in fact exist and the discriminating ideals that may be held by a person in one group (eg. Protestants) about people in

another group (eg. Catholics) may only be reinforced by witty disparaging humour that ignores any doubt about the ideas represented in the joke. Accepting the first explanation allows one to generalize the claims made about the liberating nature of humour to be generalized to all humour especially in cases where the humour leads to the recognition of the repressed doubt. The alternative explanation does not allow for this generalization and leads to a more pejorative understanding of humour. We come to a conclusion that doubt is crucial in making humour work productively in terms of social cohesion. By the same token the nature and consequences of religious faith will vary greatly depending on whether or not doubt exists and how, if at all, it is expressed.

Some see faith as a way of knowing equivalent to logic. They refer to the Bible with a "logical" appeal to authority and God's existence is therefore accepted on the authority of God. This form of faith is generally void of doubt. It is this type of faith that can be compared to the humour that is based on certainty and is used to discriminate and foster prejudice. To clarify with an example, many fundamentalist Christians (including Rondald Reagan) see God as being on the side of America and hold a belief without doubt that they are favoured in God's eyes. Humour regarding the USA/USSR tension was displayed by Johny Carson on The Tonight Show when he staged a mock telephone conversation with Leonid Breshnev to put forth his views on the Russian Olympic boycott in 1984. In this case,

Russians were excluded from the joke and no expressed doubt about the Russian's "wrongness" was displayed in Carson's routine or the reaction of the studio audience. The Carson routine reinforces the differences betweeen the Russian and American worldviews because it was presented to only one group (the Americans) who hold no reservations about their ability to pass judgements on the decisions of the Russian government. It is possible that two friends who happened to be Soviet and and American could have watched this routine together and found some amusement but the difference between this humour and the personal anecdote related earlier regarding my correspondence with my father should be obvious. One represents the coming together of members of diffferent groups and the other represents the clinging together of members of one particular group. In this case, this group is not only the studio but the American television audience.

The perspective of humour allows one to see things in a new context in a similar way as faith does- this perspective can be used in two ways. Firstly, humour can be used for the constructive purpose of dislodging and forcing people to try new perspectives, or secondly, to develop the "ill" humour that Niebuhr refers to which leads to the reinforcement of attitudes such as discrimination. In the same manner, the perspective of faith can lead two ways, one which encompasses all as equal under God and another which sees God as favouring some over others. By understanding the dual nature of the perspective of humour and relating it to faith, we can gain some insight into some of the

various forces such as discrimination that have been associated with religious practise. The common element is the potential for social exclusion that is present in both religion and humour. Both humour and faith can serve the function in society of unifying seperate groups or conversely reinforcing the discrimination of one group vis-a-vis another can be the funcion of either humour or faith.

The key theme of this section is that the perspectives of faith and humour are functional alternatives regarding the function of providing a position from which to relate to people who are members of a group that one does not belong to and that their comparison brings out a better understanding of both faith and humour. We have seen here that the concept of doubt relates to each in a similar way. When doubt is not included in faith and humour, the disunifying function is met and when a high degree of doubt exists in both the "exclusion principle" is not in effect. In this case, religion and humour serve to unify groups that would otherwise be separate.

Our understanding of religion is improved by analyzing the characteristics of the orientation of faith as a way of knowing and to observe how the element of doubt is manifested in behavior. In this case, low doubt was observed to corrspond with social exclusion in both the comic and religious realms. The link between the nature of the orientations of faith and religious practise has been clarified by this analysis. The orientation of faith, by definition, requires a position of

doubt. This can vary from very little to a great amount. This doubt can also be heavily repressed or conversely clearly expressed. The variation in this doubt has clearly been shown to transpose into predictable forms of behavior.